

*University Center for  
Excellence on  
Developmental Disabilities  
(UCEDD)*



AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**UCEDD it!**

# AUTISM

By: Tafa Tupuola

Our sister agency at the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability in collaboration with the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Autism Summer Institute. This year's theme "Everybody Reads, Everybody Writes, Everybody Has Something to Say" expresses the true message of the conference. The Autistic Self-Advocacy shared an interesting language for professionals, the respect for 'identity first'. For years professionals were encouraged to use respectful language such as 'people first' in doing so you would recognize the individual as a person first and not their disability. With identity first, the preference to describe and recognize them as autistic individuals

and not someone 'with' something draws influences from the deaf and blind communities.

The preference of identity first acknowledges that autism is a neurological developmental disability that is an integral facet of neurologically diverse personhood for people who experience it. Self-advocacy organizations that pave the way in defining who they are should be respected. Makes perfect sense! Similar to the deaf and blind community, autistic people have fought hard to be recognized as a community not as a population needing a cure or to be fixed. Autism Speaks, an organiza-

tion operated by non-autistic individuals, are heavily criticized from the autistic community for portraying autism as a disease needing a cure. With this, self-advocates campaigned heavily in public service announcements with a message "Autism Speaks does not speak for me". April is designated as Autism Awareness month and UCEDD is scheduled to have a film festival for the entire month open to the public. UCEDD is anticipating that this event will promote more awareness while embracing and respecting a unique community in American Samoa. Please stay tune on our March issue for film titles and schedule.

## SPINAL MUSCULAR ATROPHY AWARENESS

August is Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) awareness month. SMA is a group of inherited diseases that cause progressive muscle degeneration and weakness, eventually leading to death. Muscle weakness is the first on-



set sign of SMA. All forms of SMA have in common weakness caused by denervation which muscle weakens because muscle

fibers lose the connection from the spinal cord. For more information on families of SMA, please visit the research, support, and hope website at: <http://www.fsma.org>

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*"Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life"*

*~ Emma Thompson*

# “WEAVING THE PACIFIC TO END CHILD ABUSE” By: Lia Pelenato



The American Samoa Community College (ASCC) campus was flooded with more than a hundred local service providers from government and non-profit organizations to attend the Amerika Samoa Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) three-day conference entitled, “Weaving the Pacific to End Child Abuse”. The conference was held on August 8-10, 2011 with guests speakers from off-island. Attorneys and members of the National District Attorney’s Association (NDAA) in Virginia such as Suzanna Tiapula, Director of NDAA’s National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse, Amy Russell who is an attorney for the National Child Protection

Training center in Winona, Minnesota. Also, Pamela Brown Blackburn who is a Federal Labor Ombudsman Officer from the Insular Affairs US Department of Interior based in Saipan. Lastly, Ms. Alicia Lintiaco presently serves as the United States Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The conference covered topics such as Forensic Interview protocols and best practices, child protection models, age-specific interviewing, human trafficking, building partnerships, testifying in court, child maltreatment, data collection, and case management. All four presenters provided a wealth of infor-

mation for the local service providers who attended the conference which had a registration of more than a 100 per day for all three days. Before the Conference commenced, the MDT held a training for the Department of Education (DOE) counselors, teachers and office administrations at Tafuna high school on Friday, August 5, 2011. The training was hosted by Mrs. Suzanna Tiapula and focused on issues such as recognizing abuse, mandate reporting, maintained communication with students and service providers as well as reaching out to the family of the student. The ASMDT is a newly formed organization against family violence. This conference is the first of a series conferences to follow in the months of November and December 2011.



*MDT attendees during the Conference opening*

## WHAT’S YOUR STORY?

In September, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders announced the launch of its “What’s Your Story?” video challenge.



The challenge aims to explore the personal stories of

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the country who have impacted their community through their dreams, experiences, and dedication to a cause.

Watch our call our video here:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/whatsyourstory>

The video challenge asks you to share your unique experiences and the issues

that are important to you. Respond to the launch video above with a 3-minute video about your own experience and leadership. You may also submit an essay to address the questions in the video. The deadline for the challenge is November 1st. Remember that your story can be in any form and everyone is welcomed to participate. We will choose three winners and invite them and their guests to share their stories in Washington, D.C.

## 2012 THINK COLLEGE

Think College, at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, with funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, conducts a comprehensive national training initiative designed to

increase the participation of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) in postsecondary education. The emphasis of this competition is to increase opportunities for postsecondary education for Students with IDD within the UCEDD

network, in partnership with their respective DD councils and other key state partners.

\*As reported on AUCD website



## FORENSIC INTERVIEW TRAINING By: Lia Pelenato

Ms. Amy Russell, a staff attorney for the National Child Protection Training Center in Winona, Minnesota hosted a Forensic Interviewer Training on August 5, 2011 at the Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS) Child Care conference room in the Lumana'i Building in Fagatogo. Ms. Russell provides training and technical assistance for child abuse professionals across the U.S and its territories. The training was geared specifically for professionals who interviewed victims of abuse once identified and/or referred. Profes-



*AAG Mitzie J. Folau, Amy Russel, & DPS Deputy Leiseau Laumoli*

sionals such as the Child Protection Unit of DHSS, police officers from the Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU) of the Department of Public Safety, attorneys from the Attorney General's office, and members of the Amerika Samoa Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) were in attendance. Ms. Russell established the importance of forensic interviewing as a technique of investigation which should be a child-centered and truth seeking environment in three major steps. The first step in obtaining the truth from a child is by earning trust through building rapport. The initial stage of the interview can define how the relationship between the child

and interviewer is established. The second step while working on rapport is to encourage the child to describe two specific child events that have no relation to the abuse allegation. This is to assist in gauging the amount and quality of details the child is capable of providing. The narrative shared by the child should provide an avenue into the third step that involves truth. This training is tied into the MDT Conference (see previous page). The forensic training together with the MDT offered Continuing Education Units (CEU) through the Adult Education program at ASCC. Attendees interested in CEU were able to register and sign for each session of the conference to attain CEU for a future degree.

## UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES By: Lia Pelenato

On August 3, UCEDD trainer Paulia Pelenato provided a training for the Department of Education (DOE) Teacher's orientation at Tafuna Elementary School. The presentation was entitled, "Understanding Children with Disabilities" in the classroom. The target population was elementary teachers island-wide. Teachers in attendance were assigned to the general education curricu-

lum, however; since American Samoa DOE is an inclusive education, more than half of teachers work on a daily basis with children with Developmental Disabilities (DD). The training provided teachers with information such as best practices, accommodation, people-

*"Because a thing seems difficult for you, do not think it was impossible for anyone to accomplish" ~ Marcus Aurelius*

first language, and communication skills when teaching students with DD. Also, the presenter elaborated on the role of UCEDD within the disability community. Finally, resources were also given to teachers who were also parents and/or family members of students with DD.

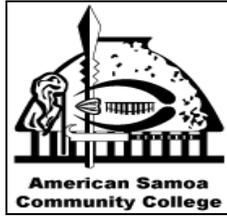
## COMBATING AUTISM REAUTHORIZATION ACT

The Combating Autism Act (CAA) was signed into law on December 19, 2006 by then President George W. Bush. This act authorizes nearly one billion dollars in expenditures over five years to combat the autism spectrum disorders of autism, Asperger syndrome, Rett syndrome, and childhood disintegrative disorder through screening, education, early intervention,

prompt referrals for treatment and services, and research. Since the act has reached its fifth year, the United States Senate passed the Combating Autism Reauthorization Act as one of its last acts before going on recess. Congress can in fact get important work done and do the right thing for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities, their families and the researchers,

faculty, professionals, and professionals-in-training who work on their behalf. On September 30th, President Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the CAA.





## MISSION STATEMENT

### ACRONYMS/MEANINGS

**ASCC:** American Samoa Community College  
**CAA:** Combating Autism Act  
**CEU:** Continuing Education Units  
**CIU:** Criminal Investigation Unit  
**DD:** Developmental Disabilities  
**DHSS:** Department of Human & Social Services  
**DOE:** Department of Education  
**ICI:** Institute for Community Inclusion  
**IDD:** Individuals with Developmental Disabilities  
**MDT:** Multi-Disciplinary Team  
**NDAA:** National District Attorney Association  
**SMA:** Spinal Muscular Atrophy  
**UCEDD:** University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

*The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) assures that individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages and their families participate fully in activities that will design and promote self determination, independence, integration and inclusion in all facets of life in American Samoa. The UCEDD will ensure the delivery and purpose of the Developmental Disabilities Act through culturally competent activities.*

### SEND US YOUR COMMENTS

We would love to hear from you if you have comments about our newsletter, or if you would like to be added to our newsletter list!

Drop us a line at: [ucedd@amsamoa.edu](mailto:ucedd@amsamoa.edu)

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**We are on the web!**

<http://asucedd.org>

*Please consider our environment before printing.*

**KEEP IT GREEN & KEEP IT ON THE LINK**

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